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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Interior Travel Procedures: Bicycle/Automobile/Rail

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1. "The following interior travel notes date to autumn 25X1A

Bicycles

2. "The purchase of a bicycle in Poland does not present any formal difficulties. A Polish-made bicycle costs 800-1500 zl. Not many people buy them for their quality is bad. A bicycle of East German production is more expensive, costing 1900-2200 zl, but a good deal better than the Polish models. Not many, however, are imported. Occasionally they go on sale in some Dcm Towarowy, i e, a large universal store. To get such a German bicycle one must be extraordinarily lucky and happen to enter the store the morning of the day a shipment is put up for sale. Whoever seriously wants to buy a German bicycle usually establishes relations with the salesmen of the store, who either buy him one, pretending to buy it for himself before the shipment goes before the general public, or tell him in good time when it will be put up for sale.
3. "Bicycles of Polish make may be bought on the instalment system since they are usually available in sufficient supply. However, the bicycle as a means of locomotion is widespread only in the Western Provinces, both in towns and villages; in Central Poland it is already an isolated phenomenon and seen practically only in the towns. The reason the use does not spread is the bad quality of the specimens available and the great difficulty in getting tires and spare parts.
4. "The owner of a bicycle must register and obtain both a registration card and a number for the vehicle. This is done at the road's or communication department (Wydział Drogowy, Komunikacyjny) of the 1 soviet (Miejska Rada Narodowa in the towns, Powiatowa Rada Narodowa in the country). To get a registration card and number one must produce one's identity paper: a passport or a temporary (red) certificate of identity and a certificate on

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one's permanent place of residence (talon of registration with the militia). Persons having no passport may also produce their metrical (birth) certificate. In Jun 53 a bicycle registration card cost 4 zl and had to be renewed every year.

5. "In principle, control on the roads occurs only if the cyclist or pedestrian appears in any way suspicious. Car drivers are controlled more frequently than others, to check whether they have drunk any alcohol. But in the coastal zone the WOP may control people's documents including the registration card of their bicycle if any. Control is pretty frequent in the frontier zones, especially if a person appears loitering and not a local resident with a proper reason for being where he is. In the interior of the country cyclists and pedestrians are practically never molested.

Automobiles

6. "No class of population in Poland, except the very highest bosses, uses the automobile as a normal means of transportation. Practically all cars are government property (except taxis, of course, and there are not too many of those) used by government or CP functionaries for official errands. If a functionary uses the official car for, e.g., driving to the theater with his wife, he really commits an offence although such practices occur without particular consequences for their perpetrators. In addition to official cars there are about 2000-3000 cars for the whole of Poland which are owned by so-called motor sportsmen, mostly young people crazy on the subject who have somehow acquired a (practically always) second-hand car. Since gasoline is hard to come by and - unless one has a very valid reason - a person may not drive farther than a 20-kilometer radius from his permanent residence, such young people spend most of their time tinkering about their cars or simply gloating over them.
7. "Everyone travelling by car from one city to another must have a travel order, which is hard to get unless one has a valid reason. Such an order is issued by the Communications Department of the local Rada Narodowa. It is made out in the name of the person driving the car; the number of passengers is noted on it. No special permit is required for each passenger unless the destination is a forbidden zone; then everyone must have a special permit to enter.
8. "The few people travelling by car across the country may take food with them or not. If they do not, there are usually enough towns on the way with restaurants where they can eat.
9. "Every car has a gasoline card on which the gasoline purchases are noted. The amount the driver may buy is limited. The gasoline is issued to the driver of the car. There are no gasoline stations on the roads; everyone setting out on a journey must have enough gasoline with him to take him to his destination and return.
10. "Our sources have not had any contact with people driving cars and do not know for sure about stickers and licence plates, but they have always seen only one kind of plate on cars.
11. "It is an error to believe that many doctors have cars of their own. This was the case three or four years ago but they can afford them no longer. Nowadays when a doctor is seen riding in a car it is usually the car of a hospital or other medical institution. Only about five doctors in Warsaw still have a car of their own today.
12. "When the car is owned by an institution it is always driven by a professional chauffeur.

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Restricted Areas

13. "Travel in restricted areas is possible only with a special permit, issued by the Rada Narodowa at the place of one's permanent residence. One must have a valid reason to go to a restricted area; it is easier to get a permit for a border area than for an industrial area. It is possible to spend one's holiday in a border area (most Polish health resorts are in border areas) if one is a fully 'reliable' citizen. Even an invitation from a relative resident in the border area is a valid reason - it all depends on one's own reliability.
14. "Industrial areas with important military industries are a more difficult proposition. For these one almost always needs an official business reason: a job there etc.
15. "It is not necessary to have in readiness a place to live when entering a restricted area. There are hotels and hostels at all such places.
16. "When entering an industrial area (e.g., a harbor, factory grounds) by car, truck or bicycle, one must have a special permit for the vehicle in addition to one's personal permit. No such permit for a vehicle is required in a border area if all one's other papers are in order, i.e. if one has a permit to enter the area.

Railways

17. "When travelling by rail there are no formalities about buying a ticket, unless travel is to a restricted area. Then one must produce a permit or travel order. The ticket itself is not stamped in any particular way. Luggage is not restricted in any special way different from regulations applying in the West. One may register a bicycle as luggage.
18. "All trains are accompanied by members of the railway guard - Straz Kolejowa - who check documents etc. In restricted areas the number of guards is usually larger than in the interior of Poland. No military personnel accompany passenger and civilian trains; they guard only military trains.
19. "The same rules govern bus and train travel. In restricted areas all depends on one's permits.
20. "Passenger travel on railway freight cars is not permitted.
21. "All passenger trains are frightfully overcrowded. A Party official, an army officer and a politician can afford to travel by second class sleeper and do it in comparative comfort. The ordinary citizen, a collective farmer or even a woman with small children and of modest means must travel third class. They can reckon on a seat only if they live at the starting point of a railway line. Otherwise they must be glad if they manage to get on the train and can stand or squat in the passage."

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